

- Hall: President Bush will leave the state of our union worse off than when he arrived in office - Washington, DC – U.S. Rep. John Hall (D-NY19) released the following statement regarding President Bush's final State of the Union address: On

the night of his final annual address to Congress, it seems almost certain that President Bush will leave the state of our union worse off than when he arrived in office seven years ago. At home, working people are faced with an increasing middle class squeeze and an economy that's heading in the wrong direction. Abroad, we've been left both less secure and less respected. As we approach the end of President Bush's term, Americans from all walks of life are ready for new leadership.

Earmark Reform

The President is coming a little late to the party on earmark reform. Earmarks exploded under Republican leadership and it was the Democratic Congress that has cut earmarks and shined a light on the earmark process. This year Democrats cut funding for earmarks in half and passed new rules that require the Appropriations Committee website to show clearly which Member of Congress requested each earmark. I'm glad that the President is finally jumping on the bandwagon and that he's agreed to work with Congress to bring stricter accountability to Presidential and Congressional earmarks. **Iraq**

The President offered no new initiatives, no new plans on troop levels in Iraq. Instead of more of the same we should have heard a plan to change course in Iraq and hold Iraqis responsible for their country's progress. After five years, nearly 4,000 American lives lost and more than half a trillion dollars in taxpayer money, we are stuck in an open-ended civil war with no end in sight. **Veterans**

I'm disappointed that we didn't hear more from President Bush on the crisis affecting America's veterans. Under this Administration, we have experienced a scandal at Walter Reed Army Hospital, 600,000 claims stuck in a backlog at the VA, record wait times for veterans seeking health care appointments, and a growing wave of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, last year the Democratic Congress passed the largest increase in veterans' health care funding in the history of the VA. I would have liked to hear something from the President to show that he understands and is trying to do more to solve the serious problems plaguing the VA and America's veterans. **Energy Independence and Global Warming**

President Bush's seven years of putting the oil industry before the people who must pay rising prices at the pump has left us in a lose, lose, lose situation. Americans are paying skyrocketing gas prices, funding both sides of the wars in the Middle East, and relying more and more heavily on China, which holds too much of our national debt. It is energy independence that is the key to stronger national security, a growing economy and a clean environment. **The**

Economy

Seven years of the Bush Administration's fiscal irresponsibility have taken a \$236 billion surplus and turned it into more than \$3.5 trillion in new debt. Health care costs and gas and heating prices continue to skyrocket, while the economy grows weaker. The gap between the richest Americans and the rest of us keeps widening. It's time for a long-term plan to grow the economy, provide stability, restore fiscal responsibility, and put us on a path toward energy independence. I'm ready to work with Congress and President Bush on a badly needed plan to stimulate our economy. -30-